



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Cashmere Harvesting Enriches Kuchi Nomads

USAID training program helps to improve cashmere production and economic opportunities for Kuchi herdsman.



USAID/ASAP

Training program participants said that cashmere harvesting is a profitable opportunity that fits well with their nomadic lifestyle.



USAID/ASAP

Kuchi nomads learn to comb their goats to collect valuable cashmere.

Afghanistan's nomadic Kuchis have lived off their livestock for centuries. Until recently, however, they were unaware that their goats produced cashmere – a valuable, renewable product that can be sold domestically and abroad. To help the Kuchi people earn essential income by selling cashmere, USAID launched Afghanistan's first training program on cashmere harvesting.

Cashmere is a down-like undercoat that keeps goats warm during winter and separates from the skin in spring. Herders can collect the valuable fur by grooming their goats with special combs – quickly producing a luxury commodity in demand around the world. Although Afghanistan is the world's third largest producer of cashmere, only 34 percent of the country's goats are combed to collect their valuable fur. USAID's training is changing this, helping to improve cashmere production and economic opportunities for Kuchis.

The Kuchi herdsman, who came from as far away as Kandahar and Helmand to attend the training in Kabul, were eager to learn how to comb their goats to collect cashmere. "We didn't know the value or the importance of cashmere before, and we didn't even know how to collect this product," said trainee Alhaj Akhtar Mohammad. "Now we are able to easily collect it and make very good business."

Kuchi leaders, including Parliamentarian Mullah Tarakail, strongly support this initiative. "I thank USAID for organizing this cashmere training and for explaining the hidden value of this product," said Mullah Tarakail. "This is a great opportunity for all of our Kuchis to increase their income, especially for the poorest." He urged the Kuchis to pass on the knowledge so that others could profit from cashmere.

Participants agreed to share their new skills with others. "We have Kuchi councils in every province and we will teach them and they will teach others," said Alhaj Akhtar Mohammad.

USAID is also helping to develop sales and trade opportunities to build up Afghanistan's cashmere industry. Two recent AgFairs, held in Mazari Sharif and Kabul, showcased the country's cashmere and provided opportunities for international investors to partner with Afghan cashmere producers and dealers. Through these programs, Afghanistan's herdsman will be able to improve their own lives using a resource they already own: cashmere-producing goats!